

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF
SOUTH CAROLINA, ON THE PROPOSED TRANSFER TO
FLORIDA OF THE BONES OF OSCEOLA, AUGUST 16, 1948.

Governor J. Strom Thurmond today announced that Collier County, Florida, has made a formal request for the return to the Seminole Nation of Southwest Florida of the remains of the tribe's last chief, Osceola, from their present resting place at Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island.

The Governor said that the request, made in person by Stuart Rabb as representative of the Florida county, has been taken under advisement to determine a proper course of action. He said that the matter will be brought before the State Sinking Fund Commission at its meeting on September 3.

Under a lease executed more than a century ago, the state retained title to Fort Moultrie and it has been Governor Thurmond's view that title to the Sullivan's Island reservation reverted to unimpaired state ownership when the Fort was evacuated by U. S. troops a year ago.

Osceola was buried at Fort Moultrie, where he had been imprisoned by the army, in 1838. A year earlier he had been seized by a U. S. punitive expedition against his Indian force in Florida while conferring under a truce. The method of his capture has long been cited as one of the most dishonorable incidents in the entire history of the Indian Wars. At the time it was justified by the army as the only means of capturing a "traitor".

Since the abandonment of Fort Moultrie, the entire post has fallen into disrepair. The marker at the grave of Osceola has been overturned by vandals and otherwise defaced.

The commissioners of Collier county, where more than half of the states 536 surviving Seminoles live, appropriated \$5,000 to be used in effecting a transfer of the remains and erecting a suitable markers. Collier county proposes to re-inter Osceola in Collier-Seminole state park, where duplicate memorial tablets already have been erected to the U. S. troops and Indian irregulars who opposed each other during the war.

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